DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 073 820 24 PS 004 193

AUTHOR	Katz, Lilian G.
TITLE	Four Questions on Early Childhood Education.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Div. of Information Technology and Dissemination.
BUREAU NO	BR-0-0288
PUB DATE	Sep 70
CONTRACT	OEC-0-70-2623(519)
NOTE	15p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Reading and Early Childhood (Columbus, Ohio, September 1970)
JOURNAL CIT	Child Study Journal; v1 n2 p43-51 Winter 1970-71
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Characteristics; Behavior Change; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Objectives; Open Education; Parent Child Relationship; Speeches; *Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

Three hypotheses concerning the problems of disadvantaged children developed during the 1960s: (1) they are deprived; (2) they are deficient in certain skills and knowledge; and (3) they are not so much deprived or deficient as they are different, with strengths that should be respected and maximized. These hypotheses provide a background for four questions concerning early childhood education: (1) What kinds of goals make sense? Are we committed to academic goals, which involve fulfilling requirements and getting good scores, or intellectual goals, which involve inquiry and experimentation? (2) What do we have to do to accomplish these goals? Open classrooms, in which students pursue their own interests and acquire skills as tools with which to study their environment, are recommended. Behavior modification techniques should be used only with knowledge of the reasons for the behaviors exhibited. (3) What qualities of teachers are needed to realize these goals? To be effective, teachers must be both warm and strong. (4) What administrative qualities must exist to meet these goals? The qualities of the administration--leadership style, friction/supportiveness--are reflected in interaction between teachers and students. (KM)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

PA-24
BR-0-0288

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED 073820

FOUR QUESTIONS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by

Lilian G. Katz

ERIC Clearinghouse on
Early Childhood Education
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801

PS 00 4193

1970

Based on a speech presented at the Conference on Reading and Early Childhood, (Title I, ESEA). September, 1970, Columbus, Ohio. Supported in part by a contract with the U.S. Office of Education, Contract OEC-0-70-2623 (519), Project No. 0-0288.

Published in Child Study Journal, Vol. 1, No. 2, Winter 1970/71. pp. 43-51.

This paper was produced pursuant to a contract with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Government position or policy.

Introduction

During the 1950's the main focus of educational effort in the United States was the improvement of the quality of education. After the launching of sputnik we had the National Defense Education Act; we began to introduce new math and science curricula into schools and began the instruction of foreign languages even in the elementary grades.

In the 1960's we turned our attention to a far more serious problem, equality of education, and we are a long way from a solution to that problem. The major thrust in education for the 1970's appears to be economy, and it may take us until the 1980's to realize that economy will undo the very slender gains we have just begun to make in both the quality and equality of education.

In the 1960's, when early childhood education got its big push, we had some favorite hypotheses concerning the problems of disadvantaged children. I refer to them as the three "D's." The first hypothesis was that the children of the poor--of all ethnic groups--were deprived. What we did then was to develop all sorts of early childhood programs designed to provide enrichment. We then had the second "D," the deficiency hypothesis, which explained the problems of poor children in terms of specific skill and knowledge deficiencies for which instructional programs were developed.

By now we are well into the period of the third "D": that children of the poor are not so much deprived or deficient as they are different. They have strengths of their own which are to be respected and maximized, and programs are designed to build on these strengths and to expose the child to the mainstream of America. It is my impression that all three hypotheses are valid to some extent. With these observations as background, I would like to raise four questions.

The Problem of Goals

The first important question is: What kinds of goals make sense? I would like to suggest a distinction between academic goals and intellectual goals. Academic goals have to do with achievement, getting good scores on tests, learning the role of pupil. At the university level they mean completing the right number of units, fulfilling the requirements, and obtaining degrees. Academic goals have no enduring value; they are tied to the institutional aspects of education. On the other hand, intellectual goals have to do with being an inquirer, an experimenter, an explorer, a question-asker. The intellectual goal is to acquire the role of learner rather than of pupil. There are differences in motivational emphases associated with these goals also. Programs which have academic goals are concerned with motivation to achieve; programs with intellectual goals focus on motivation to learn.

This distinction between the academic and intellectual goals may seem like a fine distinction, but it represents a major schism in the field of early education. Most of us upon serious thought realize that we are basically committed to intellectual goals; but we allow the academic goals to become ends in themselves--often in ways that stultify intellectual growth.

Educators do not really make decisions about goals. In a country like ours, where education is a public responsibility, the goals of education are decided upon by "society," at least, by the most vocal segments of that society. In order for educators to have a voice in setting goals for the education of children, we must do a great deal more to inspire public confidence in us.

Another aspect of the problem of goals is that early childhood education has been oversold. We have exaggerated the power of early

experiences to determine and to predict later development. This is difficult to admit when you are a specialist in early education! But we simply cannot be certain that we can teach a child something at the age of 3 or 4 years that will last him all his life. In the same way, we know that a pregnant woman needs a good diet for the new organism to be healthy. But this prenatal care does not mean that the child can't get rickets when he's 4 or 6 years old. He needs optimum nutrition all through his growth, all through the crucial years of developmen There is no way to give children experiences in the preschool period which will protect them from all later catastrophes. The converse of this position is also true: if you meet a child at the age of 10 whose development is not going well, you can still help him and set his growth off to a better course. Development is not as irreversible as we had once believed. You cannot really predict from early experience much about what a child will be like later, unless the child's environment, particularly interpersonal environment, stays the same. I am suggesting that early education is very important, but it is not more important than all later education.

Returning to the interpersonal environment, the most continuous and constant impact upon a child's environment is made by parents. They have a way of staying around and hammering away at the same old things! Parents do have long-range impacts on their children, so it seems to me that one of our goals has to be to inspire a parent to have confidence in his child. The deep-down confidence a parent has in the future of his child will carry him a long way. First grade reading methods will not! Remember that we must demonstrate to parents that their children have a chance to succeed in coping with life. I cannot imagine anything more disheartening than an

expectation of hopelessness and failure for one's own child. If we can do something substantive to increase parents' confidence in their children's future, we will have done a great deal for their children.

The Qualities of Programs

When we have agreed upon which goals make sense, then we can take up the next question: What do we have to do to make these things happen? I would like to explore this question briefly in terms of qualities of programs.

The classroom ought to be an open one. Let me add quickly that open does not mean empty. A magnificent example of this is what is happening in about 30% of the Infant (5-7 years old) Schools in England. Very exciting things are going on in these classes--even in very old buildings, with little modern equipment or materials. These classrooms are open in the sense that children may pursue their own spontaneous interests, but they are not open in terms of standards. The children are encouraged and expected to explore their own interests with great care. Attention is given to accuracy, to detail, to aesthetic form, with the thoroughness appropriate to their ages. Children are expected to do whatever interests them, but to do so extremely well. The children certainly seem to get great satisfaction from their work, and they work very hard.

In these open classrooms reading, writing, and mathematics are acquired by children as tools with which to study their environment. They do not use the environment for the purpose of studying reading and mathematics. This is a subtle but significant distinction in approaches to early education.

Another point concerns the distinction between children having fun versus getting satisfaction. We must organize classroom environments so that young children can get satisfaction from hard work, from problem solving,

exploring, inquiring, constructing, and thinking. I am not against fun! But in early childhood education we seem to have exaggerated the role of fun (and ecstasy) in the child's experience. Teachers and designers of every type of curriculum model say, "The children are having a ball." I am suspicious of that kind of evaluation. We cheat young children when we fail to engage them with us in the solid and satisfying processes of creating, constructing, problem-posing, and problem-solving. This qualitative distinction seems very striking to me when observing the modern Infant Schools in Britain. Educators must always be careful not to confuse enthusiasm with learning!

We are experiencing great pressure in early education to use what we call reinforcement or behavior modification techniques. One of the most important facts about reinforcing techniques is that they "work." Because they "work," the question of goals becomes very important. Most of us who are veteran early childhood educators find this approach to early education distasteful; we prefer a dynamic view of behavior and development. However, just because we talk about the dynamics of development does not mean that we are not, in fact, reinforcing, extinguishing, and shaping behavior! Is it really more virtuous to reinforce behavior without identifying or specifying which behaviors they are? What is of greater concern to me is that these powerful techniques for shaping the behaviors of young children are used without sufficient consideration for the meaning of behavior. Let's take as an example the disruptive child. If there are three children, all being disruptive, you might find three different meanings for these behaviors. One child might behave this way because he has been reinforced for this behavior in the past. Another child, engaging in the same behavior

PS 00 63

might be expressing an emotional injury of some kind--anxieties or fears he is trying to cope with. Another child, showing the same behavior, might simply lack knowledge or skill for an alternative way of behaving: no one has socialized him toward a more appropriate behavior for the situation.

Now for these three different genotypes; i.e., different genesis of the same behavior, different treatments are needed. Only for the first type is behavior modification a suitable teaching method. The undesirable behavior can be extinguished. For the second genotype--an emotional injury--behavior modification will "work," the behavior will go, but the injury will still be there, a new manifestation will appear, and the injury will take its toll another way. For this child, a cathartic experience is needed; a chance to express his fears or anxieties while he acquires new skills. For the third genotype, inadequate socialization, the child needs a teacher; straightforward guidance in how to solve the problem at hand more effectively. He does not need operant conditioning, he simply needs some teaching. After all, this is what teaching is about: helping the learner, at whatever age or stage, in such a way that he can solve the problems he meets when you are not there!

The Qualities of Teacher

Another question I want to raise is: What qualities of teachers are needed to realize the goals we have? In early education we have four role models. In the past, a major one was the maternal model--the teacher who kept children safe, comfortable, happy and perhaps amused, and generally substituted for the mother. This model was not sufficiently stimulating for children. We have also had a therapeutic model, emphasizing children's needs for expression and understanding. We now seem to have a division between two other role models: the instructional and facilitator models.

The instructional model is the traditional approach to teaching as information giver, task setter, and skill-drill supervisor.

The teacher of the open classroom probably exemplifies a little of all three of the models mentioned above, but she is primarily a facilitator of learning. She has the responsibility of alerting the child to those events and phenomena in his environment which are potentially instructive, interesting, and worth knowing about. She also makes demands and sets expectations for children concerning how they address their energies to these instructive phenomena. This combination of being both encouraging and exacting seems to be very difficult for our teachers to grasp.

It seems to me that teachers must exemplify all those qualities which they wish to stimulate in children. This sounds like a cliché, but is nevertheless important. Wherever I go, I ask teachers what they want to have happen to the children they work with. Invariably they give me four goals: (1) they want children to love learning; (2) they want children to have a positive self-image; (3) they want children to realize their full potentials; (4) they want children to learn to get along with others.

If this is what we, as teachers, want for our children, then we must exemplify these qualities. So we might ask ourselves: Do we really love learning? How does this show? How much learning (or changing) do we do? How hard do we seek knowledge? How curious are we? Do we find the universe interesting?

If we want children to have positive self-images, it may help for us to have them too. This is hard nowadays. Teachers are easy targets, and with our recent publicity under the heading Murder in the Schoolroom, Death at an Early Age, Why Children Fail, etc., we are unlikely to feel very positive about ourselves or our work.

Teachers must be able to combine two important personal qualities in order to realize their goals. They must be both warm and strong in their relations with children. One of these qualities alone will not help children to learn. To be loving and kind is not enough for a child to grow on. Children can only grow on the love of someone they can look up to, and they cannot look up to someone they can walk over. The young child needs a teacher who is caring, warm, and sensitive, but who can as well make demands upon him. Do not make demands upon children you do not care for, because that is tyranny, and tyranny is not good for children.

The Qualities of the System

The last question I want to raise is: What qualities of the system or administration have to exist in order to make our goals happen? I think it can be supported from research that the leadership style of the administrator (supervisor, project coordinator, or superintendent) can be seen quite precisely by observing how teachers interact with their children and their colleagues. If an administrator doesn't like the way a teacher is relating to her colleagues or her children, he should ask himself if this is not an extension of his own leadership style! There may be more transfer than we wish to admit.

Another factor of importance here is a dimension called administrative smoothness-versus-friction. In many schools a great deal of time and energy is lost in squabbling, in-fighting, and petty arguments. This seems especially true of programs which must suffer the uncertainties of year-to-year funding.

If it is true that there is continuity in the friction generated at upper administrative levels all the way down to the young children, then they are the powerless victims of adult frustration. The point is that the children cannot put a stop to this. Adults have to break the flow of

bitterness and friction. Where there is administrative friction, the parties involved must rise above it and get to work on behalf of the young child who depends entirely upon adults to provide experiences to grow on. I might add here that the reverse sequence is also true: when you see successful and productive relations between teachers and children, you can invariably find administrative support and smoothness. After all, an administrator is very important; when his work is good, he makes it possible for the really important things to happen!

It may help those who have direct responsibility for teachers to think of teachers as having at least four developmental stages. For the first stage, that of the new teacher, the main task is to find out whether she can survive, whether she can manage the classroom without major catastrophes. At this stage she needs direct support, guidance, and encouragement in context. In stage two, perhaps a year or more later when she feels sure she can manage and has been accepted by her colleagues, she begins to ask questions about individual problem children; she wants to know if her children are learning and wants help with those questions. There is hopefully a third stage, perhaps by 5 years, when she feels tired of doing the same old things and wants to know about new ideas, new developments in techniques, materials, and curriculum in general. At this stage she needs opportunities to attend workshops and conferences and exchange ideas with others. At maturity, some time after 5 years, teachers become interested in their philosophical and historical root Big questions about the nature of childhood and learning are raised. From this brief outline of stages, you can see that our traditional teacher training curricula are upside-down, if not irrelevant.

I really believe that most teachers want to do well, want to help children, want to succeed, want to enjoy and be proud of their work. Whatever part administrators can play in supporting and strengthening their efforts will ultimately help the children who depend so totally upon us.

Summary

Schools are better now than they have ever been, but they are still unworthy of our children. There is much to be done. Let us not defend our failures, nor drain our energy by placing blame. This is what I call the "Blame Drain"! Let's do our own jobs well and reach out for an alliance with those who work on other aspects of the total context of education, remembering at all times to keep our eyes on the children!

POSTSCRIPT

The Educational Resources Information Center/Early Childhood Education Clearinghouse (ERIC/ECE) is one of a system of 20 clearinghouses sponsored by the United States Office of Education to provide the educational community with information about current research and developments in the field of education. The clearinghouses, each focusing on a specific area of education, (such as early childhood, reading, linguistics, and exceptional children), are located at universities and institutions throughout the United States.

The clearinghouses search systematically to acquire current, significant documents relevant to education. These research studies, speeches, conference proceedings, curriculum guides, and other publications are abstracted, indexed and published in Research in Education (RIE), a monthly journal. RIE is available at libraries, or may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Another ERIC publication is Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), a monthly guide to periodical literature which cites articles in more than 560 journals and magazines in the field of education. Articles are indexed by subject, author, and journal contents, CIJE is available at libraries, or by subscription from CCM Information Corporation, 909 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

The Early Childhood Education Clearinghouse (ERIC/ECE) also distributes a free, current awareness newsletter which singles out RIE and CIJE articles of special interest, and reports on new books, articles, and conferences. The ERIC/ECE Newsletter also describes practical projects currently in progress, as reported by teachers and administrators. For more information, or to receive the Newsletter write: ERIC/ECE Clearinghouse, 805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

ORDER INFORMATION

References which have ED numbers may be ordered from ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), at Leasco Information Products, Inc. (In those few cases where availability is other than through EDRS, ordering information is given after the individual title and annotation.)

1. Address orders to:

   EDRS
   Leasco Information Products, Inc.
   P.O. Box Drawer O
   Bethesda, Maryland 20014

2. Give the title and ED number for each item ordered.

3. Price Schedule:

   a. The price for each title ordered in Microfiche (MF) (transparent filmcard) is $0.65. (To read MF you need a microfiche reader, available in most libraries.)

   b. The price for each title ordered in Hardcopy (HC) (photocopy reproduction) is computed according to the number of pages listed with the entry.

Pages	Price
1 - 100	$ 3.29
101 - 200	6.58
201 - 300	9.87
301 - 400	13.16
401 - 500	16.45
Each additional 1 - 100 page increment	3.29

4. Postage is included in the above rates. There is no handling charge.

5. Payment must accompany orders under $10.00

6. Orders must be in writing.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Early Childhood Education is one of a system of clearinghouses supported by the U.S. Office of Education (HEW), for the purpose of collecting, storing and disseminating information on current research and practice in education. Information about the types of material available and lists of publications may be obtained by writing to individual clearinghouses listed below.

ADULT EDUCATION
Syracuse University
107 Roney Lane
Syracuse, New York 13210

COUNSELING AND PERSONNEL SERVICES
University of Michigan
611 Church Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

DISADVANTAGED
Columbia University
Teachers College, Box 40
New York, New York 10027

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
University of Illinois
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT
University of Oregon
Library-South Wing
Eugene, Oregon 97403

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY
Stanford University
Institute for Communication Research
Stanford, California 94305

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
Council for Exceptional Children
1411 South Jefferson Davis Highway
Suite 900
Arlington, Virginia 22202

HIGHER EDUCATION
George Washington University
1 Dupont Circle, Suite 630
Washington, D. C. 20036

JUNIOR COLLEGES
University of California
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90024

LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
Modern Language Association of America
62 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10011

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCES
American Society for Information Science
1140 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.,
Washington, D. C. 20036

READING
Indiana University
200 Pine Hall
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

RURAL EDUCATION AND SMALL SCHOOLS
New Mexico State University
Box 3AP, University Park Branch
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION
Ohio State University
1460 West Lane Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43221

SOCIAL STUDIES/SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION
855 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80302

TEACHER EDUCATION
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
1 Dupont Circle, Suite 616
Washington, D. C. 20036

TEACHING OF ENGLISH
National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

TESTS, MEASUREMENT, AND EVALUATION
Educational Testing Service
Rosedale Road
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION
Ohio State University
1900 Kenney Road
Columbus, Ohio 43212

ERIC

CLEARINGHOUSE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, Illinois